

VZCZCXRO3305
PP RUEHBC RUEHBZ RUEHDE RUEH DU RUEHKUK RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHROV
RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #0083/01 0230804
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 230804Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2743
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000083

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2019
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR SAYS NEW MILITARY ACTION
AGAINST JEM WILL OCCUR IN COMING WEEKS

REF: KHARTOUM 0075

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a January 22 meeting with CDA Fernandez, influential Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail acknowledged a tactical mistake on the part of the SAF for failing to intervene quickly against JEM in recent clashes with the forces of Minni Minnawi (reftel). He admitted that the SAF's inaction gave the appearance of weakness or even collusion with JEM, but asserted that it would rectify the situation by launching strikes against JEM in the coming weeks. With regard to Minni Minnawi, Ismail told CDA that it was "painfully obvious" from his January meetings in Washington that the USG has decided to abandon Minnawi and the DPA, citing former SE Williamson's dismissal of Minnawi during meetings in Washington and enthusiastic declaration that JEM is "the real force" in Darfur. Ismail also asserted that the announcement of the ICC indictment against President Bashir in July had derailed regime plans to deal with Ahmed Haroun and Ali Koshayb, as well as other strategic steps designed to bring Sudan closer to the West. "All of that fell apart with the indictment, because it would be seen as betraying the President," he said. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On January 22, CDA Fernandez met with Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail at his offices in Khartoum. Ismail claimed to CDA that in the lead up to JEM's incursion into Muhajiriya, Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Hussein approached former rebel leader Minnawi with an offer to come to his direct aid militarily. Minnawi allegedly refused, and consequently the SAF did not intervene. Ismail admitted that this was a fateful mistake on the part of the SAF. "We ended up with Khalil controlling a new area... And he's our enemy, while Minni is not." Ismail further acknowledged that the SAF's passivity made it look weak and also gave the mistaken appearance of collusion with JEM. But he promised that this would soon be rectified. "(The SAF) is currently planning military action against JEM" in the coming weeks, he said. "Though unfortunately, this will be difficult to do without affecting civilian populations as JEM always uses them as cover." CDA responded that any mass dislocation of civilians from Muhajiriya caused by regime action will certainly be condemned by the US, especially since "you've done this before" (note: in October 2007, SAF used the Darfur rebel attack on the nearby AMIS base in Haskanita to attack and partially destroy Muhajiriya, assaulting both their peace partner Minnawi and SLA/Unity units in the area. End note). CDA urged that the SAF show restraint with vulnerable civilian populations, be transparent in its actions and take all possible steps to ensure minimum effect on civilians, "if

you don't explain what you are doing, others will do so for you".

13. (C) In discussing the difficult position in which Minni Minnawi has found himself, Ismail recounted to CDA his January 2009 trip to Washington to accompany FVP Salva Kiir for meeting with USG officials. "It was painfully obvious there that the U.S. has decided to drop Minni Minnawi (and the DPA)," he said, noting that SE Williamson was dismissive of Minnawi and hailed Khalil Ibrahim's JEM as "the real force in Darfur." Ismail told CDA that he relayed this information to Minnawi upon his return. "I warned Minni. I told him 'Your American friends have betrayed you,'" he said. Ismail sarcastically added that JEM's Washington visit to meet senior Bush Administration officials was highly ironic in that "they had just massacred several hundred people in Umm Jaras, Chad, two days before," referring to JEM's violent repression of Meidob African tribesmen on January that has ignited a blood feud between them and the Zaghawa-dominated JEM.

14. (C) Ismail also told CDA Fernandez that prior to the announcement of the ICC indictment against President Bashir, the NCP had been engaged in planning a series of strategic steps designed to bring Sudan closer to the West, beginning with the handover of Ahmed Haroun and Ali Kushayb to the ICC. Other steps being discussed were having someone else run for President other than Bashir in 2009, or having him retire after one more year (in 2010). These steps all fell apart, he said, when the arrest announcement was issued in July 2008. There was no way the NCP could follow through with those steps without being seen as betraying the President, he said, and consequently, they all fell through. "Those of us who

KHARTOUM 00000083 002 OF 002

want to really close the gap politically with the West are at a low ebb."

15. (C) Ismail said that the NCP has decided to continue, as much as possible, with business as usual on CPA implementation and on Darfur. "We will not trifle with the UN as long as they obey their current mandate." He noted the excellent cooperation now taking place between UNAMID and the GOS but he warned that Darfur has now become all but intractable. "We can't do the other things you want, like compensation and development, without a peace deal and all the rebels are holding out for a better deal." He noted that tribalism has returned with a vengeance in Darfur and the regime cannot move against heavily-armed Arab tribes, even though it would prefer to disarm them. CDA Fernandez agreed that GOS-UNAMID cooperation is much improved "but it took you over a year to decide to do so, and no one is going to give you much credit for that now." He wryly noted that "surely those who armed these Darfur Arab tribes in the first place knew what they were doing."

16. (C) Mustafa said that he intends to intensify NCP outreach with the Democrats in February. He was able to meet with figures such as Congressman Donald Payne and John Prendergast and wants to continue this dialogue. CDA welcomed dialogue but noted that there is no substitute for action, especially before the ICC, and there is much Sudan could be "doing, rather than saying" in Darfur, and on CPA implementation. For example, the adversarial relationship with INGOs and with IDP camps continues, although it has been worse in the very recent past. "By the way, whatever happened to the perpetrators of the (August 25, 2008) Kalma IDP camp massacre? Ismail noted that all these issues are solvable if there is trust between the US and Sudan, "if we have confidence in your intentions, we can work on all these things."

17. (C) Comment: It remains unclear whether the GOS was complicit in JEM's attack on Minnawi's forces, but it is benefiting from the fighting and the carnage in Muhajiriya provides it with a perfectly defensible public justification

to launch fresh attacks against JEM which could create thousands of new IDPs in the near future. With JEM reportedly holed up around the town of Muhajiriya, any aerial bombardment or other attack will most almost assuredly have civilian casualties. With Minnawi's forces weakened (on the verge of collapse, according to some accounts) and JEM perhaps soon to be on the run, the GOS has somehow in the short run come out on top, whether by Machiavellian design, sheer luck or some combination of both. The smooth-talking Mustafa always argues persuasively but the regime really hasn't altered its way of operating much. It pragmatically does improve cooperation or raise new obstacles, as circumstances dictate, and right now it is in "full cooperation mode" with UNAMID but it has not substantively changed its policies and remains ready to negotiate with anyone, rebels or Americans, or delay, deceive and lash out ruthlessly against vulnerable populations - whatever best suits its core goal of remaining in power in Sudan. End comment.

FERNANDEZ